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FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

SUMMARY

Agenda Item : D. 3. 3

India

STANDARDIZATION:
A PRE-REQUISITE FOR DEVELOPMENT

By Dr. Lal C. VERMAN,
Director,
Indian Standards Institution
and Honorary Adviser to Government
of India on Standardization

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON
THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE
BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

Agenda item : D.3.3 Specifications and standards

STANDARDIZATION: A PRE-REQUISITE FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Author's Summary)

Dr. Lal C. Verman
Director
Indian Standards Institution
and Honorary Advisor to Government of India on Standardization

1. Standardization provides the link between production and consumption not only at the ultimate point of use, but also at the innumerable points of contact in industry and trade where products pass from one hand to another. The main function of standards is to facilitate the flow of products through these transition points and having arrived at destination to fit in with the intended end-use. This applies equally well to services. Apart from helping industrial movement in this manner, standards also conserve productive effort by conserving materials, by reducing variety, by ensuring interchangeability and by making mass production possible, without in any way creating monotony.

2. The field of standardization extends to all branches of economic and cultural activity of man and can be analysed by the three attributes of standardization, namely, 'subject', 'aspect' and 'level'. These three attributes may be considered as the three dimensions of a hypothetical standardization space.

3. The aims of standardization are to achieve (a) overall economy, (b) protection of consumer interest and (c) safety and protection of health and life. Overall economy comprises economy of human effort, material, power, etc, on the one hand and on the other, the combined economy of the producer and the consumer. The attainment of the above aims corresponds to the creation of order in industry, trade and commerce and in human relationships generally.

4. Standards are formulated through intensive consultation among producers, consumers and other interests concerned with standardization. The national standards body of a country provides the forum for consultation among national groups. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) are the principal agencies for international standardization.

5. The organization of the national standards body should be such as to facilitate the bringing together of the diverse interests in its forum. Some variation is observed in the pattern and status of national standards bodies in different countries. The status varies from purely non-official to purely official. For a less-developed country, a semi-official organization seems to be suitable as it enables official planning and direction to co-exist with the initiative of private enterprise.

6. Standards are implemented either voluntarily or under obligation arising from existing legislations or from orders of higher authority. In a country where the economy is completely controlled, standards are necessarily obligatory. In a comparatively free economy, standards derive their authority from the fact that they represent commonly acceptable solutions, as ensured through the procedure adopted for their preparation. However, even in free economies, there exist spheres of public life where observance of standards cannot be left to chance, for example when public health or public safety is concerned.

7. Marks indicating compliance of goods with standards usually known as certification marks or standard marks provide a useful means to make benefits of standardization available to common man. A certification mark is a third party guarantee to the purchaser that the goods have been inspected, tested and certified by a competent and independent agency and may, therefore, be purchased with a reasonable assurance of quality.

8. Certification marking authorized by the national standards body of a country has obvious advantages. It solves the problem of small consumers, who are willing to pay for quality but can never be sure of it. It is welcome to industrial purchasers as a guarantee of quality and performance. To the producer, it affords protection against unfair competition with cheap and non-standard goods. For export trade, it has the particular merit of furnishing a means to convince overseas customers of the quality of supplies. The legal provision of penalty against the misuse of certification marks is an additional guarantee for consumers in home market and abroad.

9. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), together with the national standards bodies of some 46 countries, provide the worldwide organizational net-work currently engaged in standardization as a distinct economic activity. In industrially developed countries, industrialization has often preceded standardization, but in less-developed countries it would be more beneficial to let standardization precede industrialization, since co-ordination is more difficult at a developed stage than at the initial stages of planning.

10. In planning for standardization, developing countries have an obvious advantage over developed countries. They have the possibility to gain from the accumulated experience of other countries as reflected in the latters' published standards and more so from the recommendations of ISO and IEC and plan their industrial development with the least amount of wastage and conflict and with utmost expedition. But for this complex task, it is essential to create a national standards body with adequate means at its command.

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